The Temple Within Me
by Jonathan Olvera

Before the stones were lifted, before my knees touched the ground, I came to understand this truth: labor is a sacred language. To shape the world is to speak with it. I did not arrive in strength—I arrived in surrender. I was sent to learn, not to lead. To be shaped, not to shape.

It was not a weakness to kneel. It was reverence. And through reverence, I came to know what it meant to become more than a man. I became a vessel. I became a builder of something greater than myself.

The mist clouded my eyes, but not my purpose. In humility, I found the path. In obedience, I found my voice. And in service, I found my place among the stones of the sacred.

Looking through the mist obstructing my vision, I began to understand why I had been sent here. The air was thick, the path uncertain. Bit uneasy on my feet, I took slow, deliberate steps. I knew this work was out of my control—out of any man's control, truly.

But it had to be done.
One time. One calling.
And I was sent to do the work—in the name of my father.

The ground was not soft. Blocks of ancient rock lay scattered across the land, some cracked open, as if asking to be seeded—to be touched, transformed. I didn't know how at first. I had to learn. And it was not easy to learn.

With my innocence—with a guiltless conscience—I struggled to understand how to serve a man, a man above all others. They called him the *teacher of teachers*.

He was not cruel, but he was exacting. His words were few, his silence heavy. Every command he gave was more than instruction—it was revelation. Yet it became difficult for me, not because the work was hard, but because I didn't know who I was. I didn't know where I came from.

And yet, maybe that wasn't what mattered.
It's not always important to know where you come from.
But it *is* important to be compatible with where you're going.
It is important to learn.

Listening to the *teacher of teachers* was a difficult passage. There was no comfort, no distraction. I learned to use my nails, to kneel on stone, to bow my head in the dirt, and to pray.

It was not fun. It was not glorious. But it was sacred.

I wish to be grateful.
I wish to fill the cup with the chosen sacrifice.
I wish to be poured out in purpose.

Though the paths of the Temple were clean and uniform, marked with symmetrical lines and great pillars, it was not these that spoke to me. It was the voice.

"Young man, assist me in building this Temple. For more than you and me, there will be others."

And then he added, “That is nature.”

It was painful—to set myself aside. To think differently. I was no longer just a person. I had become something else. I was a believer in something greater than humanity.

It was my belief in the *light of the promise*—in the Creator of this Temple—that gave me strength. I had been called to this path. And one day, without prompt, I kneeled again, bowed my head deeper, and knew:

The sky, bright and endless, called me upward. The natural scene stretched for miles—prairies, wild hills, flowering grains. I could see creation, and within it, I saw the *light of God* raining down upon me.

I was exactly where I needed to be.

“Guide my hands, my God,” I whispered.

“God, hear me!” I asked aloud.

“I must build your Temple!”
“The Lord’s grace be upon me!”
“The mercy of God be upon me!”

“It is your work!” the teacher bellowed.

And I replied, shouting now, eyes wide with wonder:

“I can see! I can see!”
“God be with me!”

I rose to my feet.

Around me, there were abundant gifts—plants of many species, birds with feathers I had never seen, flowers from far lands. I stepped forward with faith, gazing beyond the Temple to endless lands of fruit and grain.

I was amazed.

Who else could do this for me?

Is this the burden you placed on me, my God?
To behold your work and continue in my nature?

"Teacher," I said, my voice shaking with hope, "I can do this."

He turned, smiling. "I know you can," he said. "You may continue."

There had been nothing in my young life more exciting than to watch the sunlight break through darkness. Not just once, but every single day. It came like a reminder: that I was alive, that I was chosen, that my work mattered.

I was aware of my God.
I was aware of the Temple.
I was aware of my place in this plan.

So I began again—this time with intention. Not only to obey, not only to serve, but to create in the name of the Creator. I walked through fields and prairies not as a wanderer, but as a witness. I had many things to do.

I lifted stones and placed them with care. I taught others what little I had learned. I prayed not for strength, but for faith.

Because faith, I learned, is what keeps you moving when strength gives out.

And now I see—truly see.

To labor in the name of the divine is not to lose yourself. It is to find the part of you that was waiting to awaken. The one that does not chase glory, but offers it up. The one that kneels not in shame, but in surrender.

I am not finished.
This Temple may never be finished.
But each stone, each field, each prayer—I know now—it becomes part of something eternal.

This is the Temple within me.